APPENDIX A

STATE AGENCY ANNEXES

to the

MONTANA DROUGHT RESPONSE PLAN

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

The Office of the Governor has a variety of responsibilities under the state drought plan. These responsibilities can be divided into three functional areas: disaster designation, activation of the Montana Drought Advisory Committee, (DAC) and public information. Each of these areas represent an essential role in the successful implementation of the state drought plan.

DAC Activation

At the request of the governor, the DAC becomes active. Activation corresponds with the requirements of state statute requiring the DAC to meet at least in February and October of each year to monitor and assess conditions that indicate the presence or probability of drought. The DAC is chaired by a representative of the governor. With the assistance of the staff, the chairperson sets meeting times, location, agendas, and requests reports and data from member and supporting agencies and individuals.

The governor's representative decides, based on quantitative information supplied by DAC state, tribal, and federal agencies, when to hold meetings between February and October. The chairperson reports to the governor on DAC matters and makes recommendations for official action. The governor evaluates the recommendations of the DAC and resolves questions of potential conflict among the DAC members and interests represented on the committee to ensure a coordinated response to drought.

Disaster Designation

County commissioners are responsible for requesting the governor to initiate the Secretarial Natural Disaster Determination process with the Secretary of Agriculture. The Governor's Office works closely, through DES, with the USDA to coordinate the process. After damage assessment information has been gathered at the county level, it is submitted to the State Emergency Board for review. The information is then passed on to the governor.

The governor acts on behalf of the affected counties by submitting a drought declaration request, through DES, to the Secretary of Agriculture. The Secretary then notifies the governor of his/her determination and the governor notifies the affected counties of the process outcome. Natural Disaster Determination by the Secretary of Agriculture triggers assistance under the Small Business Administration Economic Injury Loan Program, the CFSA Emergency Loan Program, and certain Internal Revenue Service tax considerations (see Appendix D for flowchart of process).

Public Information

The governor's office plays a major role in communicating with and leading the people of the state during drought. This role includes coordinating information releases by other state agencies, issuing major policy statements on the status of drought in the state, producing and distributing public service announcements on water conservation and drought awareness, and issuing executive orders.

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

Introduction

Drought conditions can have a significant impact on water resources in Montana. Drought may make it difficult for municipalities and individuals to obtain sufficient amounts of potable water, resulting in significant impacts on public health. Increasing withdrawals from surface sources to satisfy demands for domestic, irrigation and industrial water users may damage or destroy aquatic life. In addition, continued discharge of wastes at low stream flows can damage aquatic resources and threaten public health. For these reasons, the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) plays a role in water management during droughts in Montana. The following information summarizes these responsibilities.

Private and Public Water Supplies

Private water supplies

Drought impacts

Properly constructed private water supplies are unlikely to be affected by drought conditions. Unfortunately, many private water systems are not properly constructed and rely on surface supplies such as "pipe in the lake" systems. Some private systems rely on springs, or shallow aquifers that may be affected by drought.

Affected supplies

DEQcan only respond to private water supply problems if reported by affected parties.

Department responses

Owners of private water supplies will usually be responsible for securing alternate sources of water during drought conditions. Information about the sanitary protection of potable water will be provided to individuals upon request and to the public through news releases.

Public Water Supplies

Drought impacts

The impact of a drought on public water supplies is, to some degree, dependent on the source of supply. Supplies fed by small surface sources or groundwater derived from such sources are most vulnerable to drought.

Supplies likely to be affected

DEQ can determine which supplies in an area are most susceptible to impairment. Information on these supplies is kept on file and is available for approximately 720 community systems in Montana. The systems are classified according to sources of water for surface water systems, groundwater systems and those which use both surface and groundwater.

Capability of system to withstand drought

Surface Water Systems

Information concerning surface water flows and reservoir water levels is obtained from the USGS, DNRC, DFWP, public water supply systems, and DEQ records and experience. This information is used to determine which systems will be most affected by drought.

Groundwater Systems

Communities with groundwater systems are encouraged to monitor levels as much as possible to determine if they are declining. DEQ obtains information on groundwater levels from the USGS, the Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology, and groundwater users.

Systems that are susceptible to drought are studied to determine their ability to withstand drought conditions. Assessments include information about alternate water sources for the system, the possibility of implementing water use restrictions, and potential health impacts of water shortages.

Department response

Cooperative response

DEQ works with public water supplies, local health departments and other agencies to minimize the impact of drought on public health and will cooperate to ensure the provision of potable water to the citizens of affected areas.

Services available from DEQ include:

- Information on water conservation techniques to make the best use of a limited resource
- Advice on the use of alternate sources and options for obtaining additional water
- Treatment options to ensure safe water
- Preparing and releasing news releases for the press
- Cooperative efforts with funding agencies to find financing for emergency and/or long term solutions
- When necessary DEQ and DES can use the state's emergency water disinfection and filtration units to provide a temporary source of potable water.

Legal responsibility

If an imminent threat to public health exists, DEQ may require a public water supply system to take special measures to protect the health of its citizens (ARM 16.20.277). Those measures most often include the implementation of strict water use restrictions to maintain positive pressure in the distribution system and the provision of adequate water for domestic uses. Where contamination is a risk, boil orders or health advisories may be issued.

Permitted Waste Water Discharges

Drought impacts

Montana Pollution Discharge and Elimination System (MPDES) permits specify the conditions under which point sources, (i.e. industries or municipal wastewater treatment plants), may legally discharge pollutants to state waters. Permit limits are calculated to prevent impacts to beneficial uses of water.

A treatment plant is designed so permit limits can be achieved at any flow more than a specified value. This flow value is calculated from historical stream flow data and is the minimum flow that can be expected to occur for seven consecutive days once during any ten-year period (7Q 10) ARM 16.20.631(4). Thus, at any flow greater than the 7Q 10, the limits will ensure that instream standards and beneficial uses are protected. If stream flow drops below the 7Q 10, however, the permit no longer ensures that instream beneficial uses will be protected, and the permittee is **not** required to further treat the discharge. The greater percentage of wastes in the stream due to decreased flow and relatively constant discharge of wastes stresses aquatic life. Under these circumstances aquatic life and domestic and recreational water uses are affected.

Affected uses

When drought conditions emerge, DEQ will search its permit files to determine which discharges in a drought area may affect beneficial uses. This information will be used to direct departmental responses. The affected public and downstream users will be notified of any hazards during the drought.

General Impacts of Drought

Drought Impacts to Aquatic Life

Increased withdrawals of water during droughts subject aquatic life to decreased flows and water levels. This results in increased temperatures and decreased habitat which place unusual stress on aquatic populations. In addition, drought conditions increase the concentration of sediment and pesticides from irrigation runoff in low-water streams. Both of these pollutants can seriously damage aquatic ecosystems.

Other Impacts

Evaporation of surface water increases salinity in saline seeps and subsequently, in groundwater and runoff to surface waters. Also, toxic blue-green algae growth in reservoirs can result from decreased water levels, increased water temperatures and higher concentrations of nutrients, making reservoir management even more critical during drought periods.

Department Response

Aquatic populations affected by drought are normally in the jurisdiction of the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks. Toxic blue-green algae blooms are the responsibility of DEQ, which will issue press releases to inform the public of potential algae problems.

Department Contacts

Listed below are names and phone numbers of staff with drought responsibilities for the Department of Environmental Quality:

Response Area	Phone
Public Water Supply	444-4549
Surface Water Quality (algae blooms, etc.)	444-2406
Groundwater Quality	444-2406
Waste discharges	444-2406

Energy Production

The Montana Energy Emergency Contingency Plan was prepared by the Energy Division in 1989 to address energy shortages during emergencies, including a shortage of hydroelectric energy resulting from drought. The plan prescribes actions and measures to be taken in phased responses corresponding to the severity of a shortage. The western portion of the state is more dependent on hydroelectric generation than the eastern portion, which depends primarily on thermal power generation. When mountain snowpack levels indicate that low streamflows in coming months may threaten regional electricity supplies, states of the Pacific Northwest coordinate planning efforts to cope with the situation. Contingency plans mandate actions varying from voluntary conservation to mandatory curtailment measures that governors can order under the Energy Supply Emergency Powers Act. Copies of the plans are available from the Energy Division of DEQ.

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND CONSERVATION

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) performs two distinct functions in its role as a member of the DAC. First, there are the responsibilities that DNRC assumes as a voting member of the committee, including the technical support it provides. Second, there are responsibilities DNRC has as staff to the DAC.

AGENCY RESPONSIBILITIES

DNRC is the lead state agency concerning issues of water quantity and allocation. The authority for this responsibility is based on state law. During drought, the following elements of DNRC jurisdiction are affected in some manner.

WATER STORAGE

DNRC oversees the maintenance, management and construction of state-owned reservoirs. The primary purpose of these reservoirs is to supply water to water user associations for irrigation. Some projects have additional uses, such as recreation or power generation. DNRC is responsible for developing and implementing drought contingency plans for state-owned reservoirs.

WATER RIGHTS

DNRC is charged with recording and issuing permits for water rights. During periods of drought, inquiries concerning water rights increase, as well as conflicts regarding the allocation of water.

Resolution of conflict concerning water rights

DNRC has developed an official policy for resolving disputes among water users. The policy calls for informal means of dispute resolution to be employed before resorting to legal courses of action. In cases where a water right violation is observed by DNRC and negotiation is unsuccessful, DNRC can impose monetary penalties as provided by the 1991 Montana Legislature. In instances where an alleged water right violation is clearly resulting in immediate and serious injury, a field investigation will be conducted and a report made. Agency legal action will follow. A copy of the dispute resolution and enforcement procedure is included in the Appendix .

Water measurement

Section 85-2-150 MCA (1991) - Chronically dewatered watercourse, identification, created the Water Measurement Program. The statute provides guidelines for DNRC to designate streams and rivers as chronically dewatered watercourses and provides criteria for DNRC, in consultation with other agencies and groups, to consider in the installation of measuring devices on these watercourses. Measurement must likely contribute significantly to solving the dewatering or resolving conflicts among water right holders.

Official declarations

DNRC's efforts can be concentrated on meeting the emergency if the governor officially declares a temporary emergency or drought disaster. Such an official action suspends the processing of applications for new water uses until such time as the status is lifted, enabling DNRC to focus on resolving conflict over water allocation and answering water rights inquiries.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Renewable Resource Grant and Loan Program

DNRC administers the state's Renewable Resource Grant and Loan Program which provides funding for state and local governmental entities and private parties to promote and advance the beneficial use of water and other renewable natural resources. The legislative intent of the water development program is to allow the citizens of Montana to achieve full use of the state's water. Grants and loans are provided for projects that promote the development and efficient use of water.

DNRC's role in this process is to screen applications to determine whether project proposals are financially and technically feasible and rank the applications according to established criteria. The legislature makes the final decision on grant applications. Project proposals must be well documented and clearly meet the criteria and objectives of the program to be recommended for funding. Examples of projects that have received funding in the past include groundwater protection, improvements in irrigation efficiency, water-based recreation development, and water storage.

Funds from this source have been used for a wide variety of activities, including establishment of a statewide drought monitoring system to enhance the state's ability to respond to drought, lining of irrigation ditches to reduce water loss and improve water delivery efficiency, enhancement of instream flows through improved efficiency of agricultural water use, improvement of irrigation efficiency and other on-farm water management skills, and other measures that provide direct benefits during periods of drought.

Environmental Contingency Account

Limited funding is available for emergency projects to help solve immediate water-related problems faced by state and local governments. These funds are reserved for water development projects that, if delayed until legislative approval can be obtained, will cause substantial damage or a legal liability to the project sponsor. Emergency funds must be used to rectify an existing problem and will not be appropriated for preliminary studies or activities. In September 1994 use of the fund was authorized by the governor for a project to augment flows on the Upper Big Hole River.

REGIONAL FIELD OFFICE SERVICES

DNRC's eight regional offices play a significant role in the state's drought response. Regional offices provide information on water rights, water supply and soil moisture, and sources of water measurement assistance. Regional Office personnel participate in local drought committee meeting and provide information to the committee regarding District programs.

CONSERVATION DISTRICT SUPPORT

DNRC provides administrative, legal and technical support for the state's 59 conservation districts (CDs). DNRC offers advice and planning assistance to CDs in finding solutions to local wind and water erosion, surface and groundwater pollution, and administration of the Montana Natural Streambed and Land Preservation (310) Act. County CDs are a unit of state government, governed by a locally elected board of supervisors, who give their time and expertise voluntarily. The Montana Conservation District Law requires the districts to carry out the provisions of the Federal Clean Water Act (208), in cooperation with the Montana DEQ, and the Resource Conservation Act in cooperation with the NRCS, in addition to administering the "310" law. DNRC's eight regional offices provide technical and informational support for CDs on a localized basis.

"310" Act

All 310 permit projects must be constructed in accordance with USDA, (NRCS) practice standards and specifications for conservation practices requiring engineering services in Montana. Technical assistance for the design of irrigation diversions is available from the NRCS, which supports CD boards on a local basis. When application is made for a 310 permit, an inspection team comprised of a CD representative, DFWP, and the applicant visit the site of the proposed activity. The DFWP official may suggest methods to implement the project in a manner that protects the fishery from the impacts of disturbance and sedimentation. These design considerations are intended to mitigate damage to the fishery during periods of low flow.

DNRC holds workshops to help CD supervisors administer the "310" streambed law, which requires a person to obtain a permit before engaging in any activity that will modify a stream, its bed, or immediate banks (see Appendix). During drought, irrigators often need to change the point of diversion of water from a stream. The permit process provides the land user with helpful technical advice through an on-site consultation with representatives of the CD and DFWP.

Grant and Loan Program

CDs are eligible to apply to DNRC's Water Development Program for funding to improve the efficiency of existing irrigation projects. Projects that result in significant conservation of water or improve the efficiency of agricultural water conveyance systems receive funding priority. CDs have authority to request that county commissioners levy taxes on real property within the district to fund special projects. Conservation districts receive assistance from DNRC in the preparation of applications for water reservations to ensure an adequate supply of water for future urban and rural development.

Education

Education has been identified as the most effective long-range strategy for promoting water conservation. CDs initiate and support education programs for teachers and students by providing speakers and materials for the classroom. A scholarship program provides access for youth to natural resource camps. Adult education is offered through demonstrations, tours, and workshops on irrigation and riparian management, both areas of concern during drought.

Rangeland Program

DNRC has delegated the administration of the Rangeland Resource Program to its Conservation District Bureau which works with the CDs to comply with legislation mandating the maintenance and enhancement of the state's rangeland. Each CD provides technical and financial support for rangeland activities. This includes protecting rangeland from the impacts of overgrazing during drought.

Data Collection

DNRC generates the Soil Moisture and Water Supply Report on a monthly basis, February through September, and distributes it to nearly 200 recipients statewide including resource managers, scientists, interested individuals, and DAC members. The report combines data collected by the USGS, NWS, Reclamation, NRCS, DNRC, Montana Climate Center, and the Montana State Library. The report is the primary tool used by the DAC to identify the onset and location of drought and the severity of conditions. The state library's NRIS generates color-coded maps of the PDSI and the SWSI, the two primary indicators used by the DAC to evaluate conditions and plan responses. For more detailed description of the report and its role in drought management, refer to the section on Reporting Conditions in this plan.

DNRC RESPONSIBILITIES

Section 2-15-3308 MCA (1991) established the DAC and delegated staff duties to DNRC. Staff provides administrative support to the chairperson and the DAC. The following responsibilities, enumerated in the DAC statute, are essentially delegated to DNRC:

a) With the approval of the governor, develops and implements a state drought plan;

The staff is responsible for coordinating the components of the state drought plan. This includes development of sections concerning guiding philosophy, plan execution, and response coordination.

b) Reviews and reports drought monitoring information to the public;

Staff collects and organizes data from state and federal agencies and is prepared to answer questions or direct inquiries from the public and press to the appropriate agency or authority. Staff issues press releases through the DNRC public relations office or the governor's office concerning drought-related issues of public concern. The DNRC Water Supply and Moisture Condition Report is available at designated state library repositories in major Montana cities and on the state electronic bulletin board.

c) Coordinates timely drought impact assessments;

Staff consults with state and federal agencies concerning changes in drought conditions by assessing the monitoring information and preparing the material for presentation to the DAC for evaluation and decision-making.

d) Identifies areas of the state with a high probability of drought and targets reporting and assistance efforts to those areas;

By reviewing and assessing the reports of the monitoring agencies, the geographical areas of the state with the highest tendency or potential for severe drought can be identified. These areas are then targeted for increased levels of monitoring, assessment, and mitigation assistance.

e) Upon request, assists in organizing local drought advisory committees for the areas identified under subsection (3)(d).

To the extent that DNRC's budget permits, staff will travel to areas of worsening drought conditions to assist in the formation of local drought advisory committees(LDAC). Where LDACs have been formed in previous years, staff will contact the committee chairpersons to recommend reconvening and offer assistance.

f) Requests state agency staff to provide technical assistance to LDAC's;

When LDACs identify particular drought-related problems, the staff will contact the appropriate state and federal agencies to enlist the expertise necessary to address the problem.

g) Promotes ideas and activities for groups and individuals that may reduce drought vulnerability.

The staff is responsible for identifying and implementing long-range educational and operational options designed to reduce vulnerability of communities and economic sectors to the effects of drought.

Subsection (5) states:

The drought advisory committee shall meet, at a minimum, on or around the 15th day of October and February of each year to assess moisture conditions and, as appropriate, begin preparations for drought mitigation.

Subsection (6) states:

By March 15th of each year, the drought advisory committee shall submit a report to the governor describing the potential for drought in the coming year. If the potential for drought merits additional activity by the DAC, the report must also describe:

a) activities to be taken by the DAC for informing the public about the potential for drought;

Staff is responsible for making recommendations to the DAC, after consulting with agency personnel, for dissemination of information concerning potential drought effects to public health, safety, and welfare.

b) a schedule for completing activities;

If conditions warrant, the report to the governor must include a schedule for the completion of activities designed to address current drought effects.

c) geographic areas for which the creation of LDAC's will be suggested to local governments and citizens;

Staff will consult with reporting agency personnel and the DAC to determine whether conditions warrant the formation or reconvening of LDACs.

d) requests for the use of any available state resources that may be necessary to prevent or minimize drought impacts.

Staff will direct requests from LDACs to the appropriate state agencies to secure resources needed for the mitigation of drought effects on the local level. In addition to the duties specified in the statute, staff is responsible for:

1) Scheduling drought committee meetings;
2) Coordinating data;
3) Coordinating drought assessment activities;
4) Coordinating mitigation response activities;
5) Updating the state drought plan as needed;
6) Preparing press releases;
7) Responding to inquiries for information on water supply conditions, DAC activities, county and state disaster designation, water conservation;
8) Preparing the Report to the Governor Describing the Potential for Drought in the state for the coming year;
9) Coordinating public service announcements with state agencies;

10) Briefing the DAC on status of drought and response activities;

11) Preparing and delivering presentations to legislative committees such as the Legislative Water Policy Committee;

12) Coordinating, with the assistance of DES, the dissemination of information concerning the status of a USDA Secretarial Natural Disaster Determination;

13) Coordinating the education component of the drought management plan with the various contributing agencies;

14) Receiving information and requests for assistance from LDACs and reporting information to DAC;

15) Providing LDACs with guides to state and federal sources of technical and financial assistance;

16) Assist LDACs in organizing local responses to drought by arranging technical or financial assistance from the state.

DNRC POLICY FOR RESOLUTION OF WATER USE CONFLICTS AND WATER RIGHTS ENFORCEMENT PROCEDURE

Some of the most controversial drought issues surround the appropriation of water from Montana's streams, lakes, and reservoirs. In the past, DNRC addressed conflicts with a case by case approach, using personnel from the regional offices with support of the Water Rights Bureau. In response to an increase in complaints and inquiries, particularly during drought, DNRC developed and adopted a policy for responding to complaints and a procedure for enforcement of water rights (See Appendix D).

State Lands

Drought conditions have a major impact on DNRC activities and responsibilities. Extended periods of drying increase the importance of DNRC's wildland fire suppression responsibilities on the state, private, and federal land it is responsible for protecting. Drought conditions also significantly affect the revenue DNRC may receive from the 5 million acres of state-owned land it manages.

DROUGHT ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

DNRC's drought assessment responsibilities are mainly oriented toward the prevention and suppression of wildland fires. Specifically, the drought plan requires DNRC to identify areas of extreme fire danger due to drought conditions and provide continual assessments of the capabilities, resources, and sources of assistance available both within and outside the agency.

A. WILDLAND FIRE DANGER

All state and federal wildland firefighting organizations use the National Fire Danger Rating System to assess and monitor the conditions contributing to extreme fire danger throughout the State. The fire danger rating system is composed of several indexes which describe among other things, the probability of a fire start, the expected intensity of BTU's on the fire, and the difficulty to be expected in the control of the fire.

During the fire season, these indices are derived and updated daily from current weather and fuel moisture information gathered at over 90 reporting stations in Montana. Reporting stations enter local information into a fire computer system that provides DNRC with current fire danger information in almost any location in the state. This information, coupled with two daily fire weather forecasts from the National Weather Service, provides DNRC with the information necessary to plan and react to wildfire occurrences.

Besides monitoring conditions that contribute to fire occurrences, the DNRC monitors the availability and use of personnel and equipment within DNRC and other wildland firefighting organizations. During the fire season, a daily situation report on the use and availability of all firefighting equipment and personnel is summarized and provided to all wildland firefighting organizations.

DNRC's Fire Coordination Center in Missoula is its primary source and coordinator of fire planning and suppression. DNRC's field offices also can provide specific fire information on a regional basis. A list of the DNRC offices and phone numbers are attached.

B. DROUGHT IMPACTS ON STATE-OWNED LANDS

DNRC leases most of the 5 million acres of state-owned land it manages for grazing and agriculture. Extended periods of drought reduce the income producing potential of these lands for the school trust fund and contribute to a long term decline in the productivity of these lands. Through annual field evaluations and contacts with lessees, field offices are aware of the general condition and problems of state-owned lands.

FIRE RESPONSE SYSTEM

DNRC is responsible for minimizing the impact of wildfires through wildland fire prevention, pre-suppression, and suppression. DNRC also is charged by statute with sound management of the school trust land. This is accomplished through field activities aimed at reducing drought-related impacts on state-owned lands.

A. Prevention

Before the start of the fire season DNRC, along with other wildland fire fighting organizations, initiates a fire prevention planning effort aimed at reducing preventable fires. As drought conditions persist, the plan is updated and active fire prevention activities initiated. These activities include:

1. Use of press releases to notify the public of fire danger;
2. Delineation of high hazard areas of state land and patrolling, posting, and restricting access into these areas;
3. Cancellation of open burning permits and requesting the public to voluntarily cease operations involving the use of open fire, and;
4. Increasing the cooperation and coordination of activities with other fire protection agencies and county governments.

B. Wildfire Pre-suppression

As drought and fire conditions worsen, DNRC will initiate an increasingly active fire detection and response system aimed at rapid detection and deployment of firefighting resources. Increasing the frequency and duration of aerial detection flights and pre-positioning of personnel and equipment to high hazard areas helps reduce the response time to attack fires. The preparedness and readiness of DNRC personnel and equipment is stepped up as conditions worsen.

C. Wildfire Suppression

Suppression activities include all the work involved in the initial attack, containment, control, and extinguishing of a fire. The Department will utilize all the resources at its disposal to minimize the impact of wildfire.

RESTRICTIONS ON FOREST ACTIVITIES

DNRC may, through public proclamation, designate areas of high fire hazard and request all persons, firms, or corporations presently engaged in any activity in the areas to voluntarily cease operations or to adjust working hours to less critical periods of the day. In the event such a request is refused, the DNRC may issue a written order directing compliance.

CLOSURE OF AREAS DUE TO FIRE DANGER

When drought conditions exceed normal seasonal levels, and are predicted to continue worsening, and it is questionable whether localities will be able to cope with additional fires, a fire closure may be necessary to reduce human and other resource losses.

Under 87-3-106 MCA the governor, upon DNRC recommendation, may close an area or county to public access. The land remains closed as long as the fire closure is in effect. Closures are difficult to administer and, therefore, careful consideration must be given to all aspects of a closure prior to requesting one. Fire conditions and weather trends must be carefully analyzed. Close coordination between all agencies and strong local action are necessary to enforce the closure.

Requests for a fire closure must come from the governing body of the county. Requests received from other sources will be referred back to county commissioners for their recommendation. Commissioners submit the request to DNRC for consideration before it is forwarded to the governor. In analyzing a request for closure, DNRC, before recommending to the governor that an area be closed due to fire danger, will determine whether: The county has an active fire prevention, pre-suppression, and suppression program; that extreme burning conditions exist which exceed the normal seasonal buildup and endanger life and property, and that these conditions are expected to persist; the county has been suppressing fires, but appears unable to cope with additional fires; and that the county will enforce the closure if granted. An effort should be made to ensure that closure does not impact some activities, such as recreation, while allowing other activities, such as logging, to continue. Recreationists have played an important role in recent years in sighting and reporting wildfires.

DROUGHT RELATED IMPACTS ON STATE-OWNED LANDS

DNRC will help lessees of state-owned land with drought related problems on state lands. Technical assistance and cost share assistance is available for improvements on state-owned lands. Cost share assistance is normally available to state lessees for approved projects including new stockwater development, range renovation projects, and irrigation system improvement.

CONTACTS FOR DROUGHT RESPONSE INFORMATION

DNRC's primary coordinator for drought response information is Randy Mosley, Administrator, Field Operations Division, Phone 444-2074. The primary contact for fire danger and wildfire situation information is the DNRC's Fire Coordination Center, Forestry Division, Missoula, Phone 542-4290. Other contacts for regional information are as follows:

OFFICE	LOCATION	PHONE
Northwestern Land Office	Kalispell	542-7994
Southwestern Land Office	Missoula	542-4200
Central Land Office	Helena	444-3633
Northeastern Land Office	Lewistown	538-5989
Southern Land Office	Billings	259-3264
Eastern Land Office	Miles City	232-2034

DEPARTMENT OF FISH WILDLIFE AND PARKS
FISHERIES DIVISION
DROUGHT CONTINGENCY PLAN

Objectives

INTRODUCTION

OBJECTIVE I. Protect DFWP's Existing Instream Rights.

OBJECTIVE II. Supplement Streamflows through Purchase of Stored Water Leasing of Consumptive Rights, and Other Innovative Methods.

OBJECTIVE III. Obtain Reservoir Operations which Minimize Impacts to Fish, Wildlife and Recreation.

OBJECTIVE IV. Monitor Streamflow, Fish Populations and Fishing Use and Harvest to Ensure Carry-over of Wild Stream Fisheries while Maintaining Reasonable Opportunity for Harvest in all Streams and Lakes. Implement Emergency Regulations on Streams and Lakes as Needed.

OBJECTIVE V. Develop and Implement an Information and Education Program which Informs the Public and Maintains Consistency in the Department's Programs.

OBJECTIVE VI. Coordinate an Updated Department Drought Summary for Presentation to the Governor's Drought Advisory Committee and/or Disaster Advisory Council and the Fish, Wildlife and Parks Commission as Required.

OBJECTIVE VII. Develop and Implement Water Conservation Practices within the Agency.

Introduction

This document presents the drought contingency plan of the Fisheries Division of Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (DFWP). The plan describes actions the Division will take to protect fishery resources, including protecting instream flow water reservations and rights, securing additional water for instream flow through purchase of stored water, water leasing, cooperation with reservoir operators, and implementing emergency fishing regulations where appropriate. In addition, the Fisheries Division will monitor fish populations and document drought impacts, develop and implement an information and education program which informs the public of drought conditions and effects on fishery resources and actively participate on the Govemor's Drought Advisory Committee.

The effects of drought on fishery resources is not confined to the single year of the drought conditions. Very low flows can greatly reduce recruitment of a year class of fish by limiting spawning and rearing habitat. The impact to fisheries may not be detected by recreationists for two to four years when the year class fails to appear in the fishery in significant numbers.

OBJECTIVE I. Protect our Existing Instream Rights

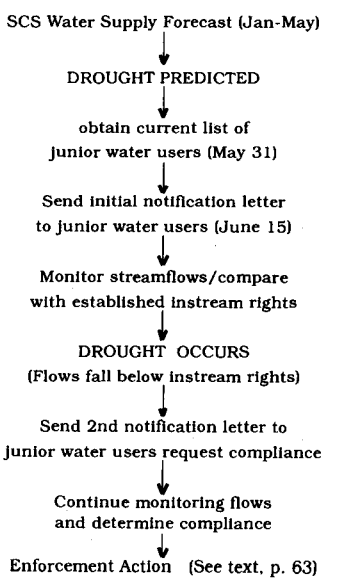
A. Summary of Existing Rights to be Protected

The instream rights to be protected include Murphy Rights on 12 streams, reservations on 66 Yellowstone basin streams, 249 Upper Missouri Basin streams, 18 Lower and Little Missouri Basin streams; Ashley Creek; Young Creek and Tobacco River. In the future other instream reservations may be granted by DNRC.

B. Protection Procedures

The schedule of decision points for protecting instream rights is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1
IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE FOR PROTECTING INSTREAM RIGHTS AND RESERVATIONS



Procedures Narrative

Water Supply Forecasts NRCS[1]

Montana's yearly water supply outlook is developed by the NRCS and its cooperators. Current snowpack and forecasts of runoff are issued each month from January through May. From these forecasts, it is possible to estimate streamflow conditions during the summer, enabling us to determine if we will need to notify junior water users about our instream rights and the possibility they may have to cease their diversions upon request.

List of Junior Water Users (Helena)

A current list of all junior water users is obtained from the Helena water rights office of the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) by May 31.

Initial Notification Letter (Helena)

If the water supply outlook is poor, an initial letter is sent to each water user whose water use priority date is junior to the priority date established for each of our instream water rights.

The initial letter simply informs those junior users of DFWP's prior right(s) in their source(s) of supply and indicates that we may, if unsuitable flow conditions actually materialize, notify them at a later time to cease their diversion(s). This letter is signed by the Department Director and is sent by regular mail. The letter should be sent by June 15 to allow junior users to develop alternatives to the use of their junior water.

Streamflow Monitoring (Helena/USGS)

Streamflows are monitored at established USGS gauging stations. Flow levels are obtained from the USGS's Helena office on a regular schedule, usually twice a week. These flows are compared to the respective instream water rights and the flow trend is monitored.

Monitoring of flows depends on having streamflow data available upon request at appropriate stream sites. These data can be obtained from non-recording gauges read daily by an observer or from continuous recording gages which automatically transfer data to a receiving station. Currently, none of streams where we have instream rights have gauges installed on them. Where gauges are not available on a particular stream, we use the closest downstream gauge which will record that stream's flow. Temporary portable gauges can be installed on streams for close monitoring during periods of low streamflow.

Second Notification Letter (Helena)

When the actual flow at any gaging station drops to the level of the established instream flow for that time of year, a second notification letter is sent to those junior users monitored by that gage. The letter requests the users to cease their diversion(s), presents gaging information and lists phone numbers they can call to keep track of the flows so they will know if they can again begin diverting water. This letter is our "call" for the water. This letter is also signed by the Department Director and is currently sent by regular mail. There is no established date on which to send this second letter; timing depends on flow conditions in a given year.

The intent of notification is to improve streamflows. Therefore, there are some exceptions to whom we send the second letter. If there are no junior users on a stream, or if the total junior use is too small to significantly affect streamflows if they cease diverting, the second notification

[1] Items in parenthesis identify responsible parties.

letter is not sent to those users. Accordingly, a decision must be made on each stream, depending on the amount of the instream water right and the number of junior users who can affect it. The flows, by month, which trigger the second notification letter are the same as the instream rights.

Enforcement Actions (Helena)

At this time, DFWP enforcement procedures rely largely upon voluntary compliance by junior water users. We do not have the time, personnel or expertise to monitor all junior users who are asked to cease their diversions unless an obvious violation is observed and reported.

The notification letters enable DFWP to maintain contact with junior users so they are again reminded of our rights. They are, therefore, primarily an informational tool — a precursor to being able to better administer those rights through a water commissioner. Court-appointed water commissioners on decreed streams are an effective means of administering instream rights and may solve immediate dewatering problems.

In contrast with its past policy, DNRC's water right enforcement activity may deal with both pre-1973 and post-1973 water rights. This policy is in response to circumstances arising from the severe drought conditions in 1992 and utilizes new authority granted by the 1991 legislature (85-2-122, MCA). The degree to which this policy will continue will depend upon an on-going evaluation of the policy during its implementation (See Appendix D, Montana Drought Response Plan). Steps to be taken by DNRC in responding to water right complaints are the following:

1. The alleged adversely affected water user (such as DFWP) makes a formal written "call" upon the junior appropriator.

2. If the "call" is ignored, the adversely affected water user (DFWP) files a written complaint with the DNRC.

3. A copy of the confirmed written "call" to the junior appropriator is submitted with DFWP's formal complaint to the DNRC.

4. The DNRC advises the alleged violator by telephone of the formal complaint and seeks a negotiated resolution of the dispute. No further action may be required.

5. If the dispute is not resolved informally, the DNRC sends a letter to the alleged violator notifying him/her of the complaint and the possible consequences of violating Montana's water laws. The letter will indicate that a field investigation has been or will likely be conducted. The letter also reminds the alleged violator that DNRC may assess a fine of up to $1000 per day for violating the Water Use Act.

6. Conduct a field investigation as soon as possible.

7. Continue to seek a negotiated resolution of the dispute.

8. If the alleged violation is not confirmed by the field investigation, send letter to both the DFWP and the alleged violator of this finding.

9. If a violation is confirmed, a second letter is sent to the alleged violator confirming the violation and reiterating possible enforcement actions to be taken.

10. If attempts to obtain a negotiated solution are unsuccessful within three days of sending written notification to the alleged violator, a recommended course of action is sent to Helena for review. A recommendation to fine the alleged water rights violator or litigate the issue shall be coordinated in consultation with the Water Rights Bureau Chief, appropriate staff and legal staff.

Additional Considerations

Current policy is to not enforce instream flow rights during the high flow period (approximately May 1 - July 15). The only real possibility of altering the existing spring runoff hydrograph (important for fish passage and spawning and maintaining channel configuration) on most streams is a large main stem impoundment. Should this future situation occur, the instream rights for the high flow period may have to be enforced.

Also, in 1980, DFWP agreed, through the Board of Natural Resources and Conservation, to relinquish a portion of our Yellowstone reservation for August and September and to not enforce our mainstem reservations between May 1 and July 10 on conservation districts above the Bighorn River. This was to satisfy the upper river conservation districts' concern over their 3rd priority to that water (municipalities have lst and DFWP has 2nd priority). This agreement allows those CD agricultural water users to produce one hay crop in all years even if water is restricted during August and September in drought years when flows fall below the instream reservations.

C. Future Actions & Needs

In order for the Department to better protect existing instream rights in the future, an expanded stream gauging network and a mechanism for enforcement of instream reservations and rights will be required, The need for an expanded gauging network exists because large sections of rivers are currently ungauged. As a result, a reach of river could be flowing at less than the instream right and not be detected. Also, many smaller streams are ungauged.

DFWP can petition the district court to appoint a water mediator in a nondecreed basin. The court appointed water mediator can discuss water use and needs with persons and entities affected by current water use, hold public meetings and conferences and negotiate potential solutions to controversies over use of water. This process may be used by DFWP as appropriate.

OBJECTIVE II. Supplement Streamflows through Purchase of Stored Water, Leasing of Consumptive Rights, and other Innovative Methods

A. Bitterroot River - Painted Rocks Reservoir

A long term water purchase contract, expiring in 2003 has been approved by DNRC, replacing the annual contract (R-2, Helena)

Develop annual stored water release plan (R-2)

Contact agricultural interests who divert from Bitterroot River and obtain their concurrence to use a water commissioner (R-2)

Petition District Court for water commissioner (R-2 & Helena Legal Unit)

Implement planned releases from Painted Rocks Reservoir (R-2)

Monitor streamflows at Bell Crossing gauge (R-2)

B. Future Actions and Needs

Identify other opportunities for purchase of stored water (e.g. Tongue, Ruby and Como reservoirs)

Continue to identify high priority streams and rights for water leasing and obtain leases

Continue to develop innovative techniques for solving dewatering problems on critical streams

Continue to develop partner-ships with water users to work on solving dewatering problems on critical streams

OBJECTIVE III. Obtain Reservoir Operations which Minimize Impacts to Fish, Wildlife and Recreation.

A. Canyon Ferry Reservoir

Determine potential for drought conditions at annual meeting of Upper Missouri River Advisory Committee (DFWP chairs committee).

Monitor runoff and precipitation conditions through Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), NRCS, DNRC (Helena).

Hold additional advisory committee meetings as necessary if critical water supply conditions develop (Helena).

Recommend appropriate adjustments in reservoir operations according to Upper Missouri River Reservoir Operating Guidelines for fish wildlife and recreation (Committee action).

Monitor streamflow conditions and reservoir levels and revise recommendations as necessary for the duration of the drought period (Helena via contact with BOR and committee members).

B. Tiber Reservoir

Determine potential for drought conditions by April 15 (Helena through NRCS, BOR, DNRC)

Monitor snowpack, precipitation and runoff (Helena via USGS, NRCS, BOR, DNRC)

Implement recommended fish, wildlife and recreation operating guidelines through Tiber Reservoir Advisory Committee (Helena, R-4 via BOR)

Make additional recommendations, as necessary, if critical water supply conditions develop (R-4 via Advisory Committee/BOR).

C. Libby Reservoir

Contact Corps of Engineers (COE) in January to determine expected runoff conditions and projected reservoir operations (R-1).

Determine probability of achieving desired minimum streamflows as per 3-tiered flow agreement with COE. Also determine subsequent effect on reservoir levels (R-1).

If necessary, recommend alternative reservoir operation (R-1, Helena).

Monitor effects of altered operation as needed (R-1).

D. Fort Peck Reservoir

Meet with COE in March at annual reservoir operation meeting and discuss expected runoff conditions and reservoir operations (Helena, R-6).

If drought conditions appear likely, develop recommendations for reservoir water levels and downstream flow releases (Helena, R-6).

Monitor effects of implemented reservoir operations as needed (R-6).

Evaluate effects of operations and develop annual operation recommendation for summer meeting of Missouri River Natural Resource Committee.

E. Yellowtail Reservoir

Meet with BOR during April to determine expected runoff conditions and projected reservoir operation (R-5, Helena).

Determine probability of achieving agreed upon streamflows given in current Upper Bighorn River Fisheries Management Plan and subsequent effect on reservoir levels (R-5, Helena).

If necessary, recommend alternative reservoir operations (R-5, Helena).

F. Hungry Horse Reservoir

Meet with BOR in January to determine expected runoff conditions and projected reservoir operation (R-1, Helena).

* Determine probability of achieving desired releases for kokanee spawning in South Fork and main Flathead Rivers (Adjust desired releases according to expected numbers of spawning kokanee) (R-1).

* If necessary, recommend alternative reservoir operation (R-1).

* Monitor effects of releases and/or altered reservoir operation (R-1).

G. Future Action and Needs

* Committees similar to the Upper Missouri River and Tiber Reservoir Advisory committees should be established for Clark Canyon and Gibson reservoirs. Efforts are underway to form these groups.

* The 1990 drought management section of the State Water Plan included the recommendation to "Inventory and review the operating plans of state-funded reservoirs to ensure that these plans address drought contingencies. Where no operating plans exist for these reservoirs, such plans should be developed and implemented...". An inventory has shown that none of the state-funded reservoirs have drought contingency plans. DFWP should cooperate with DNRC to see that these plans are developed.

* Determine which state-owned reservoirs affect important downstream fisheries (Helena, regions).

* Determine amount of any unallocated water in the reservoirs and identify operational and structural (safety) constraints at each dam (Helena).

* Monitor streamflows during drought conditions to determine if additional releases are necessary (regions).

* Work with DNRC to obtain releases from state-owned reservoirs where the fishery and flow conditions warrant (Helena, regions).

OBJECTIVE IV. Monitor Streamflow, Fish Populations, Fishing Use, and Harvest to Ensure Carry-Over of Wild Stream Fisheries while Maintaining Reasonable Opportunity for Harvest in all Streams and Lakes. Implement Emergency Regulations on Streams and Lakes as Needed.

A. Population Monitoring - as noted in the introduction, drought affects recruitment. An impact which cannot be quantified until the year class affected enters the sport fishery. This impact will be detected in the Division's annual population monitoring activities and other on-site investigations and reported.

B. Emergency Regulations—Lakes and Reservoirs (Helena, regions)

These waters are usually stocked with hatchery fish. If low water levels or high water temperatures would jeopardize survival of the populations, regulations would likely be liberalized to allow maximum harvest of fish. Some waters may be deleted from the planting schedule in the drought years. Action will be taken on a case-by-case basis.

C. Emergency Regulations—Rivers and Streams (Helena, regions)

These waters are supporting wild populations of fish. As flows decline, more restrictive regulations or voluntary catch-and-release may be recommended.

OBJECTIVE V. Develop and Implement an information and Education Program which Informs the Public and Maintains Consistency in the Department's Programs.

Disseminate information on gradual shutdown of irrigation ditches to agricultural organizations and their news media (Helena, regions, via pamphlets & news releases)

Prepare weekly drought update by region describing effects of drought on lake and stream water supplies and fisheries and distribute to DAC (Helena, regions).

Compile, via USGS, twice weekly streamflow summaries on streams where DFWP holds instream water rights and distribute to DFWP regions and DNRC water rights field offices (Helena via USGS). Regional offices can also get flow data via USGS internet home page or phone USGS directly.

Prepare PSAs, new releases, and Montana Outdoors columns on effects of drought on fish and wildlife (Helena Fish and Con Ed staffs)

OBJECTIVE VI. Coordinate an Updated Department Drought Summary for Presentation to the Governor's Drought Advisory Committee and/or Disaster Advisory Council and the Fish, Wildlife and Parks Commission as Required. (Helena, regions)

Keep abreast of drought effects on fisheries and report findings.

Attend Drought Advisory Committee meetings as requested by Director.

Provide information to Drought Advisory Committee on effects of drought on fish and wildlife.

Provide to Director, as requested, the results of Advisory Committee actions.

Attend Disaster Advisory Council meetings as requested by Director when such council is created by Governor's Executive Order.

Assist local drought advisory task forces. Participate on subcommittees as requested.

Provide drought updates and DFWP responses to drought conditions to the Fish, Wildlife and Parks Commission as requested.

OBJECTIVE VII. Develop and Implement Water Conservation Practices within the Agency. (Helena, regions)

Determine best means to conserve water at fisheries installations, hatcheries and developed fishing access sites.

Implement suitable water conservation measures and monitor and report effects.

The following drought-related documents may be obtained from:

Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks
Fisheries Division
P.O. Box 200701
1420 E. Sixth Avenue
Helena, MT 59620-0701

List of USGS stream gauges currently used to monitor instream flows.

Position statement regarding relinquishing a portion of Yellowstone instream flow reservation for August and September to benefit upper river conservation districts.

Documents relating to purchase and lease of water to supplement instream rights

List of DFWP instream flow rights and reservations

Membership list for Upper Missouri River Advisory Committee

List of state-owned reservoirs

List of chronically dewatered streams.

Federal reservoir operation guidelines for fisheries flows

Canyon Ferry (Missouri River)
Tiber Reservoir (Marias River)
Yellowtail Reservoir (Bighorn River)

MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Dryland Farming

1) The Montana Agricultural Statistics Service "Crop - Weather Report," prepared in cooperation with the Montana Department of Agriculture (Agriculture), reports crop conditions and soil moisture information. This information is published weekly April through October, and monthly from November through March. It is available to all agricultural producers and reported by the Montana media.

2) Agriculture encourages and supports use of the Federal Crop Insurance program by producers and evaluation of private insurance options to protect producers from devastation due to drought, hail or fire.

3) Agriculture will coordinate assessment and response activities with the Department of Livestock. Assessments and recommendations on impact mitigation strategies will be updated on a regular basis on the state's electronic bulletin board.

4) Protection efforts against wildfire will be enhanced as the severity of drought increases. The Cooperative Extension Service will offer education on water conservation and drought mitigation on an ongoing basis. Assistance response will be elevated to correspond with drought severity.

5) Agriculture, in cooperation with Cooperative Extension will offer education and research on drought resistant varieties, moisture-retaining tillage, and alternative domestic water supplies on an ongoing basis. Exploration of water storage alternatives will be continued. Cooperative Extension will work with the NRCS to establish a plan to work with and educate Montana producers on drought management activities.

6) The USDA is encouraged to develop and implement an active fire and insect protective program for Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acreage. The program will be developed in coordination with producers and be feasible for implementation with existing management practices.

7) The Montana Department of Agriculture will work with the USDA / CFSA and Animal and Health Inspection Services to coordinate state actions with federal drought programs.

Irrigation Water Supplies

1) New water storage facilities should be developed where possible and be available to reduce drought impacts.

2) The capacity of existing water storage facilities should be increased where possible to meet irrigation needs and augment instream flows.

3) Cooperation between water users must be fostered to augment instream flows, including regulated releases from storage facilities. Drought contingency plans should be developed for water user organizations.

4) Agriculture will encourage irrigators to participate in water conservation practices such as scheduling, soil moisture measurement and monitoring, and the Agri-Met water use planning program offered by the Bureau of Reclamation.

*ALSO SEE DEPARTMENT OF LIVESTOCK ANNEX TO STATE DROUGHT PLAN

Agriculture Phone Numbers

Department of Agriculture ..... (406) 444-3144

Agriculture Electronic Bulletin Board 1-800-962-1729

Department of Livestock .....(406) 444-2043

Montana Livestock Crimestoppers ..... (800) 647-7464

Hay and Pasture Hotline..... (406) 444-2402

MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF LIVESTOCK

As a voting member of the DAC, the Department of Livestock will:

1) Encourage livestock producers to develop alternative water supplies and work with local county soil conservation districts to enhance existing water supplies and alternatives;

2) Use the Department of Livestock laboratory for analysis of water quality for livestock use and animal health;

3) Work with the Department of Agriculture on animal health issues in controlling disease and moving livestock as outlined in the annex;

4) Work with the Soil Conservation Districts to educate livestock producers on stream bank riparian protection to maintain water supplies;

5) Increase predator control, especially where livestock has not been grazing and a high population of predators have been preying on the wildlife, or where the normal prey of the predator has been reduced due to the drought, and;

6) Develop range information to accompany the hay hotline available through the Department of Administration electronic bulletin board.

Livestock Phone Numbers

Department of Livestock	(406) 444-2043
Montana Livestock Crimestoppers	1-800 647-7464
Department of Agriculture	(406) 444-3144
Agriculture Electronic Bulletin Board	1-800-962-1729
Hay and Pasture Hotline	(406) 444-2402

DISASTER AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

1) Disaster and Emergency Services (DES) will provide assistance to the DAC in several ways. This assistance will include, but not be limited to, directing emergency or disaster program functions as authorized by the governor; acting as the liaison with local DES coordinators; coordinating the formation of local drought advisory committees and drafting recommended correspondence for the governor and county commissioners.

2) DES will assist and coordinate damage assessment activities, as needed. This task generally involves compiling the damage information the governor forwards to the USDA when requesting Natural Disaster Determination.

3) DES will help DNRC provide information concerning the drought designation to any agency or individual requesting assistance.

4) DES will coordinate the application process and implementation procedures for USDA Natural Disaster Determinations, assist in formulating any executive orders or proclamations, and act as liaison with other agencies and organizations in developing the natural disaster process. The current process is as follows:

   a) The county commissioners must request the governor to initiate the drought declaration process in writing;

   b) DES coordinates with the governor to request federal assistance through the USDA Montana office;

   c) DES recommends and prepares draft correspondence for the governor to notify the county commissioners as to the status of their request during the entire process;

   d) The USDA requests damage assessment information from the local CFSA and NRCS offices in the affected areas;

   e) The damage assessment information is returned to the USDA and forwarded to the State Emergency Board (SEB) for assessment and review;

   f) The SEB returns their recommendation to the USDA. The USDA forwards the final information with their recommendation to DES; comments are sent to the secretary of agriculture;

   g) DES prepares a packet for the governor including a draft letter for submission to the secretary of agriculture requesting Natural Disaster Determination;

   h) The governor sends the packet to the secretary of agriculture. The secretary of agriculture processes all information and sends a determination regarding Natural Disaster Designation to the governor;

   i) DES then prepares draft correspondence for the governor notifying the involved counties as to the final status of their request. Completion of the entire process can take up to six months (see Appendix E).

Producers in those counties designated as drought areas are eligible for assistance from CFSA. According to the Emergency Agricultural Credit Act of 1984, producers in contiguous counties are eligible to apply for the same assistance from CFSA.

The Small Business Administration (SBA) announces eligibility of businesses in designated counties for low-interest emergency loans shortly after USDA announces the list of designated natural disaster counties.

Internal Revenue Service (IRS) tax considerations apply when a designation is issued as referred to in the IRS publication 225 - "Farmers Tax Guide." Interested parties should check with the nearest IRS Office for information.

If you have any questions, please contact Montana Disaster and Emergency Services at 444-6911.

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

I. Monitoring and Reporting Responsibilities

The Department of (Commerce) is a member of the Drought Advisory Committee and as such, is informed along with other members of the committee about drought conditions as they develop across the state. Information detailing existing and potential drought conditions in Montana is developed by other state and federal agencies and disseminated to the committee membership. As a member of the committee, Commerce plays a role in monitoring and reporting the drought conditions in Montana.

II. Assessment Responsibilities

Drought impact assessment by Commerce will concentrate on mitigating the impact of drought on the tourism sector of the economy. Commerce also maintains data (current and historical) on state-level and county-level income, wages, salaries and employment from the Bureau of Labor Statistics at the Department of Labor & Industry, and from the Bureau of Economic Analysis, which is part of the U.S. Department of Commerce. This data is available to all agencies involved in the assessment of drought impact on agriculture and other industry sectors.

A. Tourism Assessment

Information pertaining to drought and its impact on Montana's tourism industry is readily available to Commerce. Impact assessment is conducted as follows:

1. Information is compiled by Commerce on inquiries by out-of state callers to the toll free phone line available at the Montana Promotion Division. This information is useful in determining the extent to which awareness of Montana's drought situation is affecting tourists' attitude about visiting the state. Changes in tourism as a result of negative perceptions of prospective visitors can be very damaging to Montana's economy.

2. The status of the state's tourism industry is tracked on a monthly basis. Information is assembled from various sources such as the National Park Service (counting park visitors) and elements of the industry itself (comparing current to past activity at specific facilities). This data is used to prepare impact assessments for the DAC.

3. General tourism industry conditions are analyzed from statistics available from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (Department of Labor and Industry) and from the Bureau of Economic Analysis (U.S. Department of Commerce). Data are available on monthly, quarterly, or yearly basis to illustrate employment in the "services" sector (hotels and other lodging) of the economy through comparison of current conditions with previous months and years. In order to analyze the potential impact of drought on the tourism industry, it would be necessary for the Institute for Tourism & Recreation Research at the University of Montana to analyze the data. ITRR will conduct "conversion" studies to indicate the extent of visitors who did not come because of an awareness of drought.

B. Other Business and Industry Assessment

The businesses and industries most likely to be affected by drought are those which depend upon the state's natural resources for their well being. The two major industries affected by drought are agriculture and tourism. Industries such as the timber industry can be affected if forests are closed because of fire danger. Many other businesses would be less directly affected. Commerce tries to assess the impact of drought on these secondarily-affected businesses by reviewing income and

employment data available from the Department of Labor & Industry and from the U.S. Bureau of the Census. Commerce also receives telephone inquiries from concerned businesses and informs them of the appropriate resource or agency to contact.

III. Response

Two general avenues of activity are suggested for meeting the Department's charge of reducing drought impact on commerce and tourism where possible and in promoting water conservation practices.

A. TOURISM RESPONSE

Drought's impact on the tourism industry is related not only to actual water shortage but also to how public notice of a drought situation is handled. The public's reaction to dry conditions in one area may expand to negative perception of the entire state if publicity is not accurate in its portrayal of drought. The Department will remain mindful of this situation in its drought response activities. The following vehicles are available for use in tourism-related response activities:

1. The tourism advice toll free line available to out-of-state callers can be used to inform the travelers about moisture conditions in various parts of the state. Information can be provided relative to actions being taken by other state and federal agencies such as forest closures, special fishing regulations and other official actions which will affect tourist behavior.

2. The Montana Promotion Division has the capability to produce radio and television news releases. Directions to the touring public can be disseminated in this manner.

3. The Montana Promotion Division can be established as a tourist advisory center by publicizing its telephone number or connecting with an in-state toll free number for the use by tourists and those involved in the tourism industry.

B. OTHER BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY RESPONSE

Commerce's response to drought and its possible effects on Montana's retail businesses, mining operations, and industrial facilities will vary widely depending on severity of conditions and the type of commercial activity involved. The Department will provide information to those segments of Montana's economy in need of it. This includes referencing the drought relief assistance guide, informing parties about the types of information available, and providing telephone numbers of those agencies with information. The department will assist in implementing emergency measures that might be necessary in seeking cooperation from businesses and industry.

Response Area	Phone
Department Drought Coordinator	444-3797
Tourism Contact	444-2654
Business & Industry Contact	444-3814